

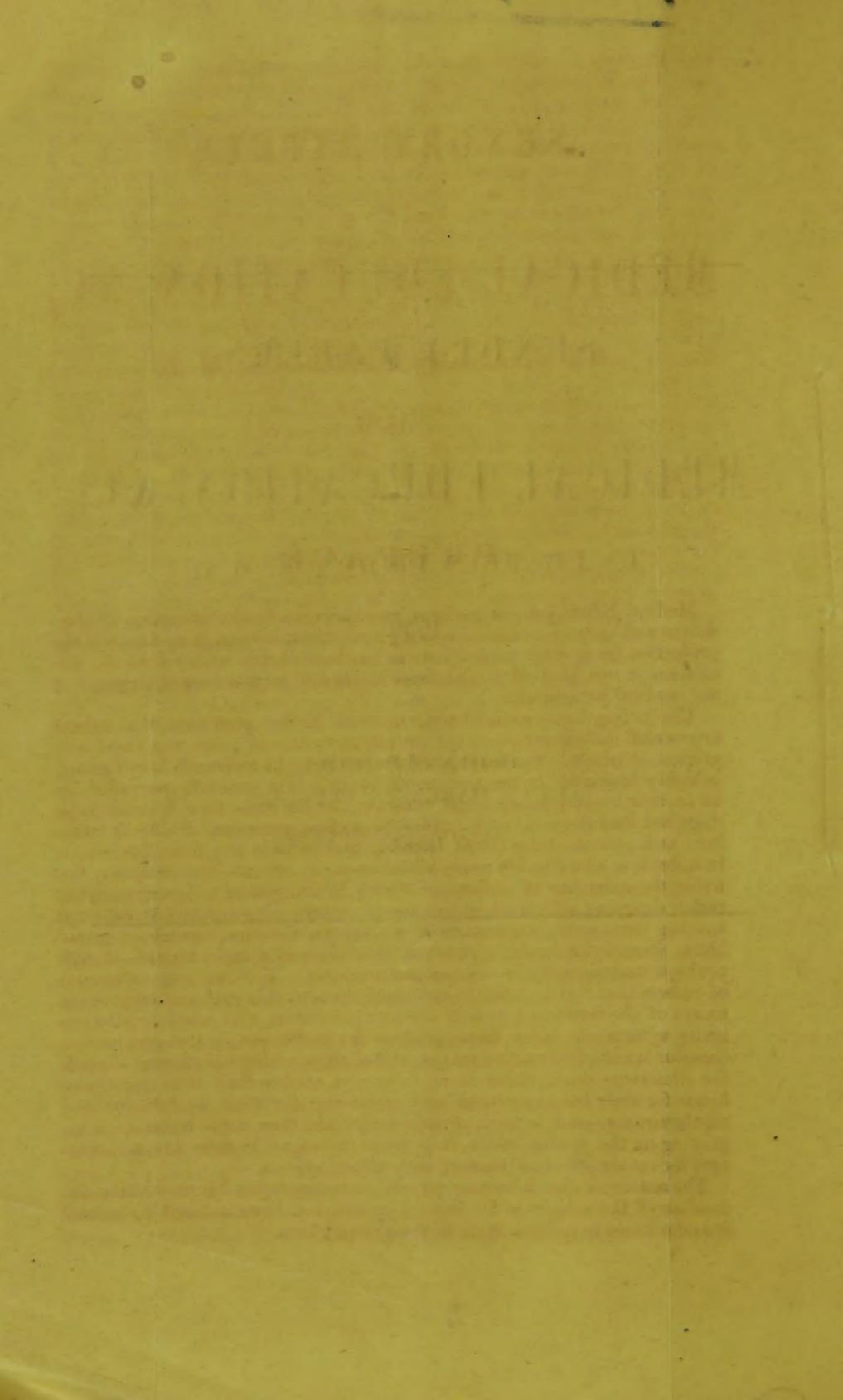
B FISHBACK (C.)

SUNDRY PAPERS
ON
MEDICAL EDUCATION, &c.
BY CHARLES FISHBACK, M. D.

1859.

INDIANAPOLIS:
ELDER & HARKNESS, PRINTERS.

1859.



SUNDRY PAPERS
ON
MEDICAL EDUCATION, & C.
BY CHARLES FISHBACK, M. D.

1859.

P R E F A C E.

Medical Education—or perhaps, more accurately, the education of physicians and surgeons—has occupied greatly the attention of numbers in the profession for several years past; as has been clearly evinced by the discussions in our Medical Associations—state and national—and in many of our medical periodicals.

The feeling has become almost universal in the profession, that radical errors and defects attach to the prevalent system of preparing those who propose to practice the healing art, for assuming its responsibilities: and it is highly honorable to the profession that it is very generally pervaded by an earnest longing for essential reforms. At the same time, it is not to be disguised that there is in the profession a class, not inconsiderable in number, and potent—from talent, learning, and position as public Teachers—in influence, who steadily resist all attempts at reform—not absolutely denying the existence of defects or errors in our system of instruction, but rather decrying efforts at reform as *premature—impracticable now*—and treating them as the suggestions of restless mal-contents, atrabilious grumbler, visionary enthusiasts, pestilent agitators, and actual enemies—though perhaps, undesignedly so—to *real improvement*. They warn the advocates of reform that “It is easier to *pull down* than to *build up*,” and point to the names of the renowned men of the past generation who developed the existing system—to infer thence, either, the perfection of the system, or a captious spirit of detraction on the part of those asking for reforms towards the illustrious dead, whom these reformers, no less than their opponents, honor for their true greatness, and reverence for their professional and manly virtues—and, indeed, triumphantly claim their noble example in improving on the system which they found in vogue in their day, as a warrant for manly effort to improve the existing system.

The author of the following papers—who has borne his part in the discussions of the subject in his limited sphere, has been induced by several considerations to publish them in the present form.

1. By the transcendent importance of the subjects discussed, to not only the medical profession, but also the entire community; who are—even more than the profession—interested in every effort to raise it to the highest degree of perfection attainable.

2. By the belief that one great cause of the barrenness of practical results from past individual and associated efforts on this behalf, is to be found in the limited and partial investigation—usual in the hurry of annual meetings of large bodies of professional men, absent from their homes and business, and anxious to return—of subjects having many difficulties intrinsic and extrinsic about them; and,

3. By a desire to contribute his mite towards the general investigation and elucidation of the questions involved, prior to the meetings of the Convention of Delegates from Medical Schools—and of the American Medical Association, to occur in June next, at New Haven, at which this will be a prominent topic of discussion—which it is most earnestly to be hoped will result in great practical good.

The author does not pretend to have exhausted the subject, but only to have glanced at the more prominent points. Nor does he claim infallibility for his views. He holds them from a profound conviction of their truth, after long and patient study, and with some experience as a student, and as a private teacher. He asks no one to adopt them on any other ground than a full persuasion of their correctness. His highest wish will have been attained should their publication be found to promote a thorough and candid examination of the subject, and an earnest purpose to pursue steadily the course which sound reason may indicate as most efficient for the speedy attainment of a standard of Medical Education in our country, commensurate with the just claims of our noble Profession, and the wants of suffering humanity.

CHARLES FISHBACK.

Shelbyville, Ind., July 12, 1859.

REPORT OF 1857.

The following Report on Medical Education—made to the Indiana State Medical Society in May, 1857—was written hurriedly on a steamer, while journeying unexpectedly, but imperatively, to a distant State, and was not received by the Secretary of the Society until after its adjournment. Consequently, no action was taken on the resolutions appended to the Report—and for this reason also, they were not published in the “Transactions” with the Report.

The Committee of the Indiana State Medical Society, appointed at the annual meeting in 1856, on Medical Education, beg leave to report as follows, *viz.*:

While it is matter of sincere congratulation with every true and worthy member of our noble and beneficent profession that the proper education of its members, both as to the standard of general and of professional education, and the best means of securing it, has enlisted so powerfully the attention of so many of the best minds of our age and country; it is, also, matter of deep regret that the discussion has resulted, as yet, in so little tangible substantial improvement, in either elevating the standard, or in

providing a more rational system of medical education. It is nevertheless true, that very much good has been done in the investigation and partial exposure of the defects of the one, and the errors of the other. And your Committee cannot forbear expressing the opinion, that one great reason that no more has been accomplished, is found in the controlling influence that prominent teachers in our profession have exercised in the discussion. For, it is believed that many considerations influence them to more partial views of the subject than others equally qualified to judge.

Your committee, regarding the subject as one of vital importance to the profession, have given it much consideration; and while it is impossible for them, in the limits of this Report, to discuss fully the entire subject in all its relations and bearings, they propose to glance briefly at some of the considerations which, they think, call upon this Society to take an outspoken and decided stand in favor of a high standard of medical education, and a rational system of means for its attainment. In doing this, they must necessarily bring under review the present prevailing standard and system. If in their progress they should seem to use any roughness, let it not be forgotten that the true surgeon is never deterred from a thorough exploration of an injury, however harsh to the unprofessional bystander, or even the patient, some of his most valuable means and methods of investigation may appear.

The first consideration which they mention is, the auspicious circumstance that we have no organized, operative manufactory of medical diplomas in our State to contend with—and therefore can come to the consideration of the subject free from this most dangerous trammel to fairness—that we will have merely to construct, and not to *reconstruct*, a system of medical education. But it is mainly in the high claims of humanity upon our profession, in the noble and beneficent position it assumes to occupy towards the afflicted, that we find the most weighty considerations for the adoption of a high standard and a rational mode of medical education. In order to bring these considerations to bear, we must view somewhat narrowly the present standard, in comparison with a proper one—and examine closely the present system in comparison with a rational one.

We may safely assert that no other profession requires either so high order of talent or so great degree of cultivation of it, as the proper practice of medicine and surgery. Yet what multitudes enter the profession with but a very small amount of either! Your committee believe that the day cannot be remote, when reformation in medical teaching *must* and *will* be effected. The progressive spirit of the age has already done much for the improvement of our noble profession. But the love of money—the indisposition, so common, to labor for that which does not produce an immediate return in coin—the seemingly innate thirst of men for humbuggery—and the superlatively complex character of medical science, have conspired to prevent *medical teaching* from receiving that benefit from the advancing spirit of the age which has accrued to the literature and the art of the profession. The difficulties in the way of reformation are certainly numerous and great—perhaps beyond our conception—yet every ennobling sentiment of the profession demands that they be diligently sought out, encountered with determination, and completely vanquished. The numerous *isms*, *specialties*, and even *burlesques* of systems of the profession are slowly and unintentionally, but certainly, preparing the way for reformation; and your committee are persuaded that many of the best minds of the profession are sighing, “God speed the day!” Such will not always remain silent. Though oppressed with other more immediate, and therefore *felt* necessary labors, they will, after awhile, speak out in tones not to be disregarded, demanding *at least equal* educational facilities with other profes-

sions. These should encourage and emulate each other in their efforts to discover and lay bare the causes of the existing state of things, and to point out and apply the appropriate remedies.

In the further prosecution of the subject, your committee propose to consider: 1st, the present condition of Medical Education; 2d, the causes thereof; and 3d, the remedies therefor, including time and mode of application.

1. The present condition of Medical Education. Is it rational? Is it what we wish it were? Is it not *just what we permit it to be?*

The first unsound point in the current system, to which your committee would direct attention, is one of fundamental importance, viz: The entire want of care in the selection of candidates for the study of the profession. The peculiarities of mental endowment, usually govern parents and guardians in the choice of the legal or clerical profession, or one of the numerous trades of life for their children or wards, but seldom is thought of with respect to our profession. In truth, there is too much foundation for the charge, that "Doctors are usually made of the refuse children," i. e., of such as are not likely to succeed in other professions, or even in agricultural or mechanical pursuits. No other profession or pursuit affords freer scope to the very highest powers of observation, of analysis, of reasoning, than ours. None demands a larger amount of *common-sense, practical talent*. Genius, in the ordinary sense of the term, will find here but little scope. Theoretical medicine may furnish fields for the display of genius, the creative powers of the imagination; but practical medicine, judiciously pursued, demands close, patient, persevering observation, and rigid, logical induction. The prevailing professional sentiment, as well as the popular opinion, must undergo a material change, before our profession can command the talent necessary to make professional education what it should be. In other words, *we must have suitable timber.*

2. This *suitable timber must be thoroughly seasoned*, before it is wrought into professional form, i. e., preliminary education must be thorough and complete. What multitudes enter the profession, without any adequate stock of general, or professional knowledge, or discipline of the mental powers! And it is probable that no other single defect operates more extensively to the detriment of the profession, than *want of mental discipline*—unless it be want of conscientiousness. In the almost infinite variety and relations of the functions, physiological and pathological, of the human frame; in the frequently obscure, and often contradictory symptoms present, and the large number and great diversity of the remedies from which to select, sharp powers of observation, and of reasoning, a sound, well-poised, self-reliant judgment, with *familiar* knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, *materia medica*, and therapeutics, are indispensable to the well equiped physician and surgeon; and just here, it may not be out of place to intimate the belief, that it is because *the people* cannot detect and expose deficiencies of this kind, that so many incompetent men fill the ranks of our profession. These indispensable traits and equipments of the true physician, cannot be obtained without thorough, and previously acquired mental discipline. Yet, students are too often allowed to enter on the study of medicine with little or no more preliminary education, and often with less than if about to enter a grocery store. And while your committee rejoice in being able to refer to a resolution of this Society, amongst its very first acts, imposing on its members the "duty to discourage young men from the study of medicine, who have not the ability, &c."—see page 9, of "Proceedings of the State Medical Convention of Indiana," for 1849—they cannot forbear expressing the fear, if not the conviction, that this resolution is practically disregarded by some of those members of the Society,

whom, for their general devotion to the interests of the profession, your committee delight to honor, whose erroneous example will therefore prove the more pernicious.

3. Professional education, properly so called, is both defective and erroneous in many particulars. The time appropriated to its attainment, is far too limited. The schools, or, more properly speaking, the money making machines, into which far too many of our medical schools have degenerated, pretend to require two years of study, prior to attendance upon their lectures and dissections; but who has heard of an inquiry on the subject, of a candidate for matriculation, in the last ten years? And who is not aware that many *commence* the study (so called) of medicine, by attendance on a course of lectures? But the time is too short, were it rigidly required, and even industriously and judiciously employed. No man can secure a good knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, *materia medica*, and therapeutics, principles of diagnosis, obstetrics, medical chemistry, pharmacy, and medical jurisprudence in three years, how diligent soever he may be. And your committee do not hesitate to assert, that the more faithful the student, the more sensible will he be of the insufficiency of the time, even at the end of a *four* years course of study.

But again, the *mode* of study, if mode that can be called which has no system whatever, is utterly *irrational*. With confessedly the most intricate, complex, and we may add, uncertain, of all the sciences, and the most difficult of all the arts for his study and practice, the student usually enters a physician's office, has access to his books and a few medicines—is, perhaps, advised somewhat respecting his reading—occasionally sees a case of disease or an operation, or more properly speaking, sees the subject of the disease or operation, for he has not the requisite knowledge to enable him to observe the one or the other to any purpose; and in a majority of cases, this constitutes the sum total of instruction received in the office. Could there be a more palpable perversion of language than to call this *instruction*? Are ministers, or lawyers, merchants or artizans of any kind made by such instruction?

Not less objectionable, if not indeed more reprehensible, is the course of instruction, so called, in our medical schools. Here, from 100 to 500 students—as many as possible, for the greater the number the more money is made—are collected, and without regard or inquiry respecting their preparation for attendance upon lectures, and without classification according to the stage of study in each individual case, they are shown the way to the different lecture-rooms. If they choose, they may hear daily six lectures of about fifty minutes each, for a period of from six to twelve or fourteen weeks, on as many different topics, in crowded rooms, either too hot or too cold, and with but a single daily intermission of two hours. Is a knowledge of any other science obtained in such a manner? And what are the lectures? Instruction prepared by the lecturers and not elsewhere attainable? Why, no! Ninety-nine hundredths of it all can be found, equally as well expressed, if not better, in the various text-books of the profession. Not a single teacher has the time, in the four months term, to even gallop over the ground belonging to his department. Very much matter of equal importance to that exhibited to the class, is necessarily omitted, and much more is so hastily run over, that but feeble impressions of it are made upon the student's mind, and those feeble impressions are necessarily confused and often erroneous. Four of these lectures follow each other in succession before the dinner recess of two hours. Weary nature demands all of this recess for rest and refreshment, allowing no time for arranging the matter of the lectures, and still less for properly digesting it. The same may be said of the supper recess. Then follows three hours in the dissect-

ing rooms, usually in the midst of filth, surrounded by noise and confusion, each student is associated with several others in the order of matriculation, who may or *may not*—most generally the latter—care a groat for any benefit they may derive therefrom, save making the entrance to the green-room, to which it, or the \$10 it costs, is the key. And a single demonstrator to half a dozen or more of such classes! Of these demonstrations in either the dead-room or the lecture-room, the most that can be said, is, that they are a *clumsy farce*—of little or no advantage to either professors (except the dimes they put in their pockets) or pupils, and bringing serious disadvantages to the latter, among which may be mentioned deceiving them into the supposition that they are acquiring a knowledge of the science of medicine, the waste of their time and money, and the formation of bad habits of study and observation—all leading necessarily to superficiality of attainments and to irrational routinism in subsequent practice. And, lest self-culture, under the guidance of common sense, might release the student from this slavish bondage, the chains must be riveted by the requirement of attendance upon a second course of lectures, which are yet not indeed *another course*, but merely a repetition of the first, after an interval of twelve months! The so-called *quiz* of second course students is little else than a farce, for it is notorious that the idle, if possessed of sufficient non-chalance and a certain pertness, succeed equally with the most studious. The same may be said of the green-room examinations, as also that the graduation fee of \$25 or \$30 blinds to many and great defects, and largely aids in imposing on the community a host of unqualified physicians and surgeons, who, though often conscious of their defects, have yet neither the moral courage to confess them, nor the mental vigor to remedy them; and following the example of not a few professors, they degenerate into *respectable quacks* or undisguised mountebanks.

Finally, our system of instruction in medical schools is based upon the idea of the “almighty dollar” as its chief corner-stone, and is, therefore, rotten in a vital point. Hence, the first object is to get a class, and the schools have vied with each other, *not* in giving the greatest possible amount of professional instruction in a given time, and at a given cost, but in enticing the largest number of students into their respective halls. Hence, a few weeks’ attendance often passes for a full course, provided only the full course is paid for. Hence, also, almost every candidate for the degree is graduated. The examinations having degenerated into a mere form, each institution easily satisfying conscience with the plea that its examinations are as rigid as its neighbors’, and *cannot be more without driving students to other and no better schools!*

Our code of Ethics beautifully says of practitioners—and the remark is equally applicable to teachers—“Medicine is a liberal profession, and those admitted into its ranks, should found their expectations of practice upon the extent of their qualifications, not on intrigue or artifice.” What a different state of things would soon exist were this precept faithfully observed by all our profession! To be sure, they do occasionally, in each lecture term, denounce “quackery” and compliment orthodoxy; but expressions of this kind so evidently belong to the order of “soft soap,” so lavishly used by dealers in small wares, that they have no weight whatever. Place distinctly and honestly before the students of our medical schools, the true nature of our profession and the proper objects and motives of its pursuits, and your committee hazard nothing in saying that three-fourths of them will confess to themselves, if not to their fellows, that such considerations never entered their minds. Hence, more than from all other sources, flows the almost resistless torrent of real empiricism (in the garb of true orthodoxy) and distrust of scientific medicine that is sweeping over our

land, and driving in disgust from the profession many of its brightest ornaments—exalting not a few of the baser sort, and entailing debility of constitution, actual disease, and deformity or death upon multitudes, at a cost far greater than sufficient, if properly expended, to qualify and support a number of competent medical men equal to the wants of community.

But we are admonished to pass on to the consideration of the remedies for this confessedly deplorable state of medical education. The subject has been much discussed of late years; and although it is thus shown to be a matter of great interest, and though many good suggestions have been made in the course of the discussion, no satisfactory system of measures for the removal of the evils, has yet been devised. This result your committee regard as attributable mainly to two causes: 1. To the want of a *rational, practical, common-sense investigation* of the whole subject, untrammeled by existing modes and means of education, and looking to *fundamental reform* rather than to mere patchwork; and 2. To the opposition of the existing medical schools, energized as it is—often, no doubt, unconsciously—by pecuniary and professorial interests, and supported as it is by the fast spirit of the age, to the adoption of a more rational system. “Young America” is not willing to plod along the slow and toilsome way marked out by sound reason, but is bent on rushing into the practical arena, regardless of the necessary (on their plan) absence of qualification for its responsibilities and duties; and we are sorry that we are compelled to say that professional teachers yield far too much to this fast spirit of “Young America.”

What are the requisites for the proper discharge of the weighty responsibilities and arduous labors of the practice of medicine and surgery? And how can these requisites be best attained in a reasonable degree? Proper answers to these two inquiries will, your Committee think, indicate the kind of education demanded by the interests of the profession and of the people, and also of the best method of securing it.

The first indispensable requisite in the physician is good mental endowments, combined with at least fair physical powers. In mental endowments we include intellectual faculties, both perceptive and reflective, and the moral sentiments; and by *good* mental endowments, something above mediocrity, and the more above, the better. Inattention to this point constitutes the first and one of the greatest defects in the current system of medical education. It is as if rotten limestone were used for the foundation of an immense granite superstructure. A few minutes consideration of the extensive range of scientific study required, and the superlatively intricate nature of the science of Life, Health, Disease, and Remedies, *practically*, and not abstractly, must satisfy any reflecting mind that a man of ordinary mental endowments can never attain respectability in the profession, *if the proper tests thereof are fairly applied*. Fair physical powers means the ability to endure the irregular labor, repose, meals, exposure to vicissitudes of weather and temperature, and, above all, the severe intellectual and emotional efforts inseparable from the proper discharge of professional duties.

The second requisite is the *thorough training* of the mental endowments and physical powers to such degree as will fit their possessor for their prompt, skilful, and sustained exercise in any and all emergencies. The safety of life, of health, or of limb, often depends on the possession of this requisite. And, alas, how often is the one or the other sacrificed to the want of it in professional men! The considerations already referred to in proof of the radical necessity for good mental endowments, show still more conclusively, if possible, the importance of this second requisite.

The third requisite is such full and thorough instruction in the science and practice of medicine and surgery, and the collateral sciences, as will

make the student complete master of the great principles of the science, and give him a degree of expertness in their practical application to the details of the "ars medendi." Few, if any, respectable members of the profession will dispute the correctness of these views. But when we come to consider how these requisites can best be attained, considerable disagreement may be found to exist, and it becomes us, by a careful study of the whole subject, in the exercise of a spirit of liberality towards those who differ from us, *to aim at the discovery of the truth*, for its intrinsic value, and as a basis of greater unity of sentiment and concert of action amongst the members of the profession.

The first of these requisites can be secured only by firmly rejecting from pupilage candidates of inferior mental endowments or physical powers. This will be found more difficult of accomplishment than would seem probable at first glance. For you must first ascertain the want of this requisite by the candidate, and then convince him of the fact, not only in opposition to his self-esteem, but also in opposition to the fixed purpose of himself or his advisers that he shall and will be a doctor.

The second requisite may be secured only by a long course of hard study. The length of time may vary in different cases, but several years, at the least, are necessary to the formation of fixed habits of close observation of facts and principles, and rigid logical induction. No other profession presents subjects for investigation surrounded with like inherent difficulties, nor does any other afford so numerous or great opportunities or temptations for partial and defective observation and fallacious reasoning. The fundamental principles of the science of theology and of law are plain and easily understood, and are uniform in their manifestations and application. Not so in our profession. The subtle principles of Life, in its endless variety of manifestations, influenced by innumerable surroundings—some obvious in their influence, but many more, obscure—and by the more mysterious action of mind and emotion, are the subjects of investigation, not only in their normal and regular, but also in their abnormal and irregular conditions. Thus, while the true physician is the fittest representative of the highest style of profound ratiocination, the poorest reasoner may pass amongst the unprofessional as respectable. The first resolution of the Committee on Preliminary Education in the American Medical Association of 1847, although looking in the right direction, evidently falls short of the mark. Mental and Moral Philosophy, Botany, Natural History, Inorganic Chemistry, Geology, Zoology, and ability to read freely the Latin and Greek classics, or, better still, some of the best scientific and professional works in those languages, and speak the French and German languages, ought to be added to their list, in order to afford the mental training necessary to insure the promptness, skill, and perseverance in the use of the mental powers, and of the matieries medendi, almost daily required of the true physician and surgeon. This requisite cannot be generally secured until a public and professional sentiment shall have been created demanding it, which, we must confess, does not now exist; and if we act on the principle of "taking things as we find them," never will exist, unless we adopt that other principle, that we must constantly strive, with all our might, to make "things" what they should be. Let us exercise common sense, and the characteristic benevolence of our profession, in the thorough and repeated discussion of the matter, both in and out of the profession. Let us candidly acknowledge our deficiencies, and do all in our power to lessen those of our immediate successors, by straining the standard as high as possible for every student coming within the reach of our direct or indirect influence. By pursuing such a course, we will induce the public to demand a higher standard of mental culture for medical men, and the de-

mand must precede the supply. Here we want *education* rather than *instruction*; *mental development* primarily—*instruction AS A MEANS of mental development*.

The third requisite can be easily secured by a rational course of study, of three or four years' duration, by one who possesses the first and second requisites, and by none other, however long the period of professional study. When we consider the great number of organs in the human frame, the entirely concealed position of the most important of them, their numerous and complex relations and dependencies, their individual, relative, and combined functions, and the external agencies affecting them; the variations, congenital and acquired, of the life-force in different individuals; hereditary influences; the numerous subtle and latent causes of disease; the almost infinite variety of remedial forces and agents; the Protean forms and vague character of diseased manifestations, &c., &c., it must be obvious that we have not named too long a period of time for professional study. But this course of study *must be a rational one*; and we proceed to indicate what we mean by that term.

There should be a thorough study of but one or two subjects only, for some time, say Anatomy and Physiology as one, and Materia Medica, Medical Chemistry and Pharmacy as another. The student should carefully read the best text books; examine as much as possible the dead and the living subject; learn by actual inspection the natural and physical properties of the Materia Medica, and perform chemical experiments. On all his studies he should be fully and closely examined by the preceptor—daily, if practicable. After sufficient progress is made in these branches, add Pathology to the one and Therapeutics to the other. Still later, at appropriate periods, add Institutes of Medicine and Medical Jurisprudence, Practice, including Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children, and the principles and practice of Surgery. Let the student have a preceptor to guide him in his studies, to examine him, aid in raveling intricacies as they arise, and instruct him in the details of practical diagnosis, dressings, and pharmacy, for the first year alone; and in conjunction with the lecturers during the last three years of study.

Let us have a Medical School, entirely and amply supported by the State, and open to all her citizens, possessed of suitable preliminary qualifications, free of charge. Let it be as fully manned with teachers as you please, but with only two, or, at most, three lectures daily, of one and a half hours each, preceded by half an hour's *real* examination of the students on the subjects of previous study, with the application and use, by both teachers and pupils together, of all the dressings and instruments used in surgery. Let the lecture term consist of not less than nine months in the year, and three terms constitute a course; *i. e.*, let each professor occupy nine months in each year, for three years, in going consecutively through his department, devoting, say one-third of the last term, to a review of the whole course. The time of the students out of the lecture room should be diligently employed in the study of the subject-matter of the lectures—practicing the application on each other of the various bandages, splints, &c., &c., preparing medicines, and filling prescriptions. Clinical practice, either in hospital or private practice, or both, should be seen and participated in, during the last year at least. Then let us secure some such legislation as this, *viz.*: Let the State Medical Society choose a Board of seven medical examiners, from men eminent in the profession, not residents of the State. Let the Board meet at the capital once or twice annually, for the public, oral examination of all candidates for the future practice of medicine and surgery. Let certificates be issued to those found to possess the necessary qualifications authorizing them to practice the profession, and allow none

hereafter to enter upon the practice without such certificate, under heavy penalties.

Such, your Committee regard as a *rational* course of preparation for the practice of a profession vastly more intimately related to all the earthly interests of the entire human family than any other. And they cannot believe it, in all its essential features, either *unattainable*, or attainable *only at some remote period*, unless the members of this Society, and other worthy members of the profession in this State, prove derelict of duty. Shall we go to work rationally and energetically, *determined* to attain so desirable and so glorious a result? Or shall we sit down, fold our hands, sigh at the magnitude and glorious character of the object, *wish* it were attained, and put forth no rational, great-sustained efforts for its attainment? The old system, irrational as it evidently is, will struggle hard for life. Many who live by the craft, will cry out as of old, under similar impulses, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." And we may find some, who ought to be earnest coadjutors, wholly indifferent, if not actual opposers. But our noble profession—noble in its nature, its origin, and its aims—degraded only by the unworthiness of its professed representatives—and poor, bleeding, suffering humanity call in trumpet-tones, and in agonizing wails, upon us to go forward, in the spirit of the "Great Physician," to the accomplishment of the glorious and beneficent work before us.

Resolved, That in view of the immense importance of this subject, its thorough investigation be earnestly recommended to every member of this Society, and to all local medical societies in the State; and to this end,

Resolved, That an extra session of this Society be held in this city [In dianapolis], on the second Tuesday of January next [1858], and the two days following, for the discussion of this subject in connection with that of legislation—and that non-medical men of the State who feel interested, be cordially invited to participate in the discussion.

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to address a circular to one or more physicians in each and every county in the State, urging the formation of county or district societies—where such do not already exist—and the more perfect organization, and more efficient working of those already formed, and suggesting a closer union of all local societies with the State Society, in the hope thereby of more effectually "Maintaining union, harmony, and good government among the members of the profession, and promoting its interests, honor, and usefulness."

Resolved, That it be earnestly recommended to all the members of this Society, to require of candidates for pupilage, good mental endowments, and preliminary education equal at least, to that recommended by the American Medical Association before cited—and also, more thorough *professional* qualification than merely sufficient to secure the diplomas of many of our medical schools.

All of which is respectfully submitted on behalf of the committee.

CHARLES FISHBACK, *Chairman.*

Steamer *National*, Red River, La., May 5, 1857.

In the *North American Medico-Chirurgical Review*, edited by Drs. Gross and Richardson, for July 1857, will be found an article on the "American System of Medical Education," coinciding remarkably with the views of this Report.

At the same meeting of the same Society, in May 1857, "Dr. Jameson,

from special committee to memorialize our last Legislature, offered the Report of the Chairman, Dr. Fishback, and moved that it be referred without reading, to the Committee on Publication. Carried." See Transactions of 1857, page 8.

This Report was not published in the Transactions, but is inserted here, on account of its bearings on the subject of Medical Education.

REPORT ON LEGISLATION.

The Committee of the Indiana State Medical Society, appointed at the annual meeting in May, 1856, "to urge upon the next legislature, the enactment of such laws as may be requisite for the protection of the community from incompetency and recklessness on the part of practitioners of Medicine and Surgery, and the Apothecary's art," would report as follows, *viz*:

About the 1st of December, 1856, the Chairman of the Committee visited Indianapolis, to confer with the other members of the committee, about the matter assigned to them. The result was, that several hundred copies of the following petition to the legislature and circular to physicians, were printed:

P E T I T I O N .

The undersigned, citizens of the State of Indiana, feeling assured that many persons utterly incompetent, are recklessly engaged in the practice of Medicine and Surgery, and the Apothecary's art, in this State, to the great injury of the good people thereof, hereby respectfully ask the Legislature to take the matter into consideration, and pass such laws as may be requisite for the protection of the community in this regard.

December, 1856.

C I R C U L A R .

DEAR SIR:—The undersigned, a Committee of the Indiana State Medical Society, to urge upon the next Legislature, suitable legal enactments for the protection of the community from incompetency or recklessness in Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries, respectfully ask your aid and co-operation, as follows, *viz*:

1. Place the accompanying petitions in the hands of some efficient persons, physicians or not, as you may deem best, in different sections of your county, with the request that they will have them presented to all the voters in their several districts for signature, without delay.

2. Return the petitions by mail, with names of subscribers, to your Representative at Indianapolis, on or before the Tuesday next following the meeting of the next Legislature.

3. Secure the presence of as many of the educated physicians of your county as practicable, at a meeting at J. W. Gordon's Office, in Indianapolis, on the evening of Tuesday, the 13th of Jan., 1857, for conference in reference to the details of this subject.

CHARLES FISHBACK,
P. H. JAMESON,
G. W. MEARS. } *Committee.*

A copy of each was sent to every member of the Society whose address could be obtained, and to some regular practitioner, in each and every county in the State. The chairman of your committee went to Indianapolis at the time appointed, and met a few friends of the cause. A special committee of each House of the Legislature had already been appointed, and to them the petitions numerously signed, had been referred. Your committee had frequent conferences with members of the legislative committees, and two meetings with the committees of the two Houses—Hon. Wm. Grose, of Henry county, and Dr. Freeland, of Knox county, being their respective chairmen. Those committees were large, and contained a number of medical men, amongst the most earnest and laborious of whom should be mentioned, Drs. Freeland, of the Senate, and Todd, of the House, who cordially aided your committee.

These conferences resulted in the development of two facts: 1. That a very general feeling prevails, both in and out of the profession, in favor of the expediency and necessity of some legislative action for the protection of the people in this regard. And 2. That no positive legislation could be expected at that session, on account of pre-occupancy of the minds and the time of the people's representatives with more engrossing and exciting topics of discussion and action.

Your committee was less anxious for completed legislation at this time, than for a consideration of the subject, by the special committee of the Legislature, such as would lay the foundation for its discussion, both in and out of the profession—with a view to the development of a matured and correct public sentiment, professional and non-professional, before the meeting of another Legislature. Your committee was therefore entirely satisfied with the decision of the Legislative Committee—made, indeed, in accordance with the wishes and at the suggestion of your committee—to present a report, arguing, “That it is not merely expedient, but *obligatory*, under our Constitution, to provide for the safety and well being of the people in their limbs, their health, and their lives, against the ignorance of pretended Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries, *by legislation*;” and to ask the printing, by legislative authority, of a large number of the Report for general circulation. A copy of it (1200 were printed by the two Houses) is appended to and made part of this Report.

Neither your committee nor the legislative committee could agree upon the details of legislation for the attainment of the object in view. The chairman of your committee presented a plan, the general principles of which he regards as just, philosophical, and *ultimately* practicable, if adopted after mature consideration, as he believes it will be by most reflecting men who will give it their full attention. It is appended hereto, and made part of this Report. The bill accompanying the Report of the Legislative Committee, and which was approved by a majority of your committee, differs essentially from the plan named, and a copy of it will be appended hereto, if it can be procured. Your committee regret that it was not printed with the Legislative Report.

Your committee would respectfully suggest that the Society adopt such measures as in its wisdom may seem best, to secure thorough consideration and discussion of the whole subject, by the members of the profession all over the State, and especially before the people. Your committee are fully persuaded that much of the necessity—confessedly urgent—for legislative action in this behalf, grows out of a failure, to a greater or less extent, in past time, on the part of members of the profession, individually, to endeavor to enlighten the public mind respecting the mutual relations and duties of medical men, real and pretended, and society at large; and, the best means of differential diagnosis of the two classes, by the public; and,

also, to cultivate more highly than is generally done, an *esprit du corps* of the most elevated order—one having reference to the profession, as such, and not as a trade—nor to themselves as tradesmen. They therefore recommend the adoption of the following resolutions, viz :

1. *Resolved*, That the foregoing Report and accompanying papers, be printed with the “Transactions,” and that one thousand extra copies of said Report, &c., be printed, separately, in cheap form, for circulation amongst the people.

2. *Resolved*, That every member of the profession in the State, be respectfully urged to give the subject earnest attention, and to lose no opportunity to bring it to the notice of the people amongst whom they reside.

3. *Resolved*, That an extra meeting of this Society be held at the capital on the second Tuesday of January next, (and two following days) for the discussion of this subject, and that medical men of surrounding states, and non-medical men of Indiana, who may feel interested, are cordially invited to be present and participate in the discussion.

4. *Resolved*, That the newspaper press of Indiana be requested to devote a small space to this important topic, and that a committee of three be appointed to prepare suitable matter for the press.

5. *Resolved*, That a committee of three be appointed to urge this matter upon the attention of the next Legislature.

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF INDIANA LEGISLATURE.

In the House of Representatives of the Indiana Legislature, Feb. 27, 1857, “Mr. Grose, from the select committee on the practice of Medicine and Surgery, made the following Report:

MR. SPEAKER:—The select committee to whom was referred the many petitions, numerously signed, from various parts of the State, praying for the protection of the community, by legislation, against the ignorance, incompetency, and recklessness of Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries, having maturely considered the subject, beg leave to report as follows, viz:

They suppose it will be very generally conceded that no other interests relating to the present life, can claim greater importance than those connected with health, whether considered in relation to individuals or communities; and whether the happiness, or the pecuniary interests of either the individual or community, are regarded.

Infirm health, or distortion, or impairment of limbs, not only entails positive evil upon the individual possessor thereof, and his immediate family—as every one well knows—but also diminishes his productive energies, consumes in his care the time and strength of his family and friends, and absorbs in expenditure for medical and surgical aid, medicines, &c., much of the actual products of his own and his family's diminished energies; but, in addition to all this, contributes largely to fill our alms houses, prisons, and institutions for the deaf, dumb, blind, and the insane; thus at once lessening the revenue of the State, which is derived from and proportioned to the actively engaged productive energies of all the individuals constituting the community, and increasing the expenditures of the State in making provision for those thus rendered unable to provide for themselves.

These positions need no demonstration, for they are patent to all observant and reflecting minds; but they may be illustrated by individual cases, by our county poor houses, and hospital for the insane: e. g. G. H. and wife are persons of average physical power and industry. They commenced life poor in worldly goods, and a rapidly increasing family, with not more than an ordinary amount of sickness, has kept them so. The spring has come—H. has rented a farm, and has well prepared the ground and planted his corn. While ministering to the wants of a neighbor, of the nature of whose illness he is not aware, and misled by an ignorant Doctor, he contracts small-pox, and before he is aware of it, has communicated it to his children. Being himself the first attacked, and having the disease in a mild form, through the influence of vaccination in early life, he does not become aware of its true nature until shown in his unprotected (by vaccination) family. Their cases occurring successively, require his constant care, until the season for cultivating his crop is passed: and, while he has rent to pay, he has no crop with which to pay it, or to sustain his family until another is made. This is no fictitious case, for it has actually occurred within thirty miles of this capital in the past year. Every entrance to the Insane Hospital is the result of disease or injury—and so, also, is almost every admission to our Poor-Houses.

Equally palpable and undeniable is the proposition, that to qualify any man for performing beneficially to the community, the offices of Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries, the possession of much and varied knowledge specially pertaining to these callings, is indispensably requisite. The blacksmith must serve a considerable apprenticeship before he can properly shoe a horse; the engineer a more protracted one, before he is allowed to run a train over our railroads; and the falls and river pilots must receive license to practice their respective callings, from those who are qualified to judge of their fitness. By our statutes, no one can teach in our common schools, unless he has first been examined by an officer appointed for that purpose, and received from him a certificate of qualification; and the minimum of such qualification—"a knowledge of orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, and English grammar"—is fixed by the statutes; nor is this minimum too great by any means.

Now let us glance at some of the branches of knowledge indispensably necessary for the practice of Medicine, Surgery, and the Apothecary's art, in such a manner as will promote the good of community—in addition to any measure of general classical and scientific knowledge that is attainable.

1. Anatomy, or the number, shape, situation, structure, and connection of all parts or organs of our frame, in which are more than two hundred bones, and four hundred muscles, besides nerves, blood-vessels, glands, &c., almost innumerable—and of all these, in both healthy and diseased states.

2. Physiology, or the healthy action of all this multitude of organs, not only singly, but combined as they are in the living body.

3. Pathology, or the diseased action of all these organs in the same relation.

4. Materia Medica, Chemistry, and Pharmacy, or the immense number of remedies, animal, vegetable, and mineral—their physical, medicinal, and toxicological properties—modes of preparation, use, and effects upon the organism.

5. Practical Medicine, including the detection of diseased structures and functions, from the plainest to the most hidden and intricate, and the practical application of the principles and facts supplied by the other branches.

6. Surgical Anatomy, and the principles and practice of Operative Surgery.

7. The diseases peculiar to women and children, with the best means for their relief.

All this, and much more knowledge, must be familiar to the practitioner of the healing art, to prevent him from often doing more harm than good; and the wisest is often perplexed, and not unfrequently defeated in his most diligent and faithful efforts to discover and correct disordered actions of the human frame, so "fearfully and wonderfully made." Whilst the apothecary should be perfectly familiar with Chemistry, Materia Medica, and Pharmacy, in order to avoid mistakes in putting up medicines, which may be, and frequently are, fatal to the most valuable lives.

If the masses are incompetent, as is confessed by the statute, to judge of the qualifications of the candidate for common school teacher, who is to instruct their children in spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic, how much more incompetent must they be, to judge of the qualifications of the candidate for the practice of a profession requiring vastly more extended and varied attainments!

Go through the country and inquire of every family that has been cursed with incompetent medical men, and you will find that most of them have spent years in ascertaining the fact, ultimately learned in the hard and costly school of experience, of the ignorance of pretended Doctors, who really knew little, if any more, about the science of medicine, than themselves. Add to this fact the numerous arts resorted to by these ignorant pretenders, to conceal their ignorance, and to make a show of extensive learning, and it will not excite wonder that it so often occurs that the most grossly ignorant, have the reputation of great profundity.

Many persons do engage in the practice of Medicine, Surgery, and the Apothecary's art, who are wofully ignorant of most or all of those branches of science, a knowledge of which has been shown to be essential to a beneficial pursuit of the profession. This is the uniform testimony of medical men throughout the State, without a solitary exception; and also, of most non-professional men, of general intelligence.

From the foregoing premises, which we briefly recapitulate, viz: 1. The vast importance to the community, of incompetency in medical men. 2. The extensive range of knowledge requisite to make them competent. 3. The impossibility of the masses estimating, correctly, the qualifications of candidates for practice. And 4. The fact that many incompetent men do, to the great injury of the people and the State, practice these professions—your committee are forced to the conclusion that it is not merely expedient, but *obligatory*, under our Constitution, to provide for the safety and well being of the people, in their limbs, their health, and their lives, against the ignorance of pretended Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries, by legislation.

What that legislation should be, has appeared to your committee a question of much more difficulty. And while they cannot declare so positively on this point as the other, they nevertheless have strong confidence that good will result from the following enactments, which they recommend, *viz*:

1. That all persons hereafter engaging in the practice of Medicine and Surgery, should first procure a certificate of qualification from the Board of Medical Examiners, in this act provided for.

2. All Apothecaries shall procure, before commencing business, a certificate of qualification, from the Examiner on Chemistry, Materia Medica, and Pharmacy.

Your committee, in consideration of the above submitted reasons, have reported the accompanying bill, and recommend its passage.

PLAN OF LEGISLATION

Proposed by the Chairman of the Committee to the Legislative Committee for the Protection of Community against the Incompetency and Recklessness of Practitioners of Medicine, Surgery, and the Apothecary's Art.

1st. Create, by statute, a Board of Examiners, seven in number, to be selected by the State Medical Society, from amongst eminent medical men, not residents of the State. The Board to meet once or twice annually at the capital, at stated times, for the public oral examination of all future candidates for the practice of Medicine, Surgery, and of the Apothecary's art; one on Anatomy; one on Physiology and Medical Jurisprudence; one on Pathology; one on Materia-Medica, Pharmacy and Chemistry; one on Practical Medicine, including diagnosis; one on Surgical Anatomy and the principles and practice of operative Surgery; and another on Parturition and the Diseases of Women and Children. Let the examinations be thorough, free from partiality or undue leniency; and let a very nearly unanimous judgment of the Board be requisite to authorize a certificate of qualification to issue from said Board to the Secretary of State; who shall, thereupon, issue a license to practice Medicine, or Surgery, or the Apothecary's art, as the case may be. The candidate for the latter being examined only on Materia-Medica, Pharmacy, and Toxicology.

2d. Forbid, on penalty of fine and imprisonment, any one from hereafter commencing in this State the practice of these arts, without such examination, and license duly obtained.

3d. Remunerate examining Board from State treasury; providing the means therefor by a license fee of \$20 to \$50, as may be required; to be paid into the treasury by each candidate for examination.

4th. Require the vendors of Patent and other Medicinal compounds to place on every package or parcel offered for sale, the names and proportions of each and every ingredient, in plain English.

5th. Allow the dissection of the bodies of criminals and paupers, by medical men and their students.

REPORT OF 1858.

At the annual meeting of the same Society in May, 1858, no member of the Committee on Medical Education, appointed at the previous meeting, was present; and a new Committee was appointed to report at a time set during the current sessions. This Committee offered the following Report, at the time specified, which was read and discussed at some length; and, after the adoption of the first clause of the first resolution appended to it, was withdrawn by the Committee; and then, on motion, laid on the table. It is as follows, viz.:

Under ordinary circumstances, your extemporaneous Committee would feel constrained, respectfully, but firmly, to decline the hasty preparation of the Report now required. But in view of the facts that the first-named member of the present Committee was charged two years since with the

duties of Chairman of the Standing Committee on Medical Education, and, also, of a Special Committee to memorialize the Legislature for protection to the community against incompetency and recklessness on the part of Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries; and, in consequence of the paramount claims of bereaved kindred upon his presence in a distant State, at the time of the last annual meeting of the Society, could not himself present these Reports; and the one which was presented was neither read nor published, and the other was published only in part—your Committee have concluded to present the whole now as one Report, and ask its consideration and approval, amendment, or rejection. And whilst sincerely regretting that more time is not at their disposal, do not feel at liberty to allow the opportunity to pass without lifting up their voice, feeble though it be, in advocacy of the vast importance to the Society, the entire profession of the State, and the whole community, of full discussion and proper action in relation to the subjects involved.

We all know something of our own deficiencies of knowledge and skill; and much of those of the masses engaged in practice in our State; and the consequent losses and sufferings of the people; and we deplore alike the one and the other. Are we willing to go manfully to work to remedy existing evils as far as practicable; making some personal and pecuniary sacrifices, if need be, to secure such results? Or, shall we fold our hands and wait for the good time *always* COMING to the slaggard? If we will resolutely do the former, we will prove ourselves worthy of a place in the noblest of professions, save one; if the latter, our utter unworthiness will be manifest.

Your Committee do not claim to be infallible, nor to have attained unto perfection; but, not satisfied with present attainments, they would urge forward, if possible, the profession of our State to a higher position than it now occupies. They do not offer the suggestions of the Reports herein embodied, as specifics, or as all-powerful nostrums, but rather as rational means and methods of advancing our profession to a noble eminence; to be carefully considered, and approved or rejected, accordingly. They confidently believe that the true character and qualifications which ought to be possessed by every medical man, and the aims of the profession in its associated capacity, are not fully understood by ourselves, and much less by the people; and that we never can secure the ends at which we aim until they are better understood; and therefore recommend discussion of the subject here, in the county societies, on the streets, and amongst the people every where. They cannot but rejoice at the accumulating evidences of the past eighteen months, that the profession, of not our own State only, but also of the Union generally, and the people too, are more willing to discuss the subject than heretofore.

Your Committee recommend the adoption of the following Resolutions, *viz.*:

1st. *Resolved*, That this Society concurring in the general principles of the foregoing Report, directs its publication in the Transactions; and authorizes the issue of one thousand copies of the Report separately, in cheap form, for distribution amongst the community.

2d. *Resolved*, That the Society will hold an extra meeting in this place [Indianapolis,] on the first Tuesday in January next, and the two following days, for the further discussion of the subjects embraced in the Report, and that non-medical men, who feel interested, be cordially invited to attend and participate in the discussion.

3d. *Resolved*, That County Societies, and members of this Society, be urged to agitate the subject in their respective localities, through the press and otherwise, as may be practicable.

4th. *Resolved*, That a Committee of Arrangements and of Correspond-

ence be appointed to make all needful preparations for the proposed extra meeting; and to apply to the next Legislature on this behalf; and report fully to the next annual meeting.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

CHARLES FISHBACK,
J. H. BROWER. } Committee.

Indianapolis, May 20, 1858.

REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL EDUCATION.
BY CHAS. FISHBACK, M. D., SHELBYVILLE.

(Reprinted from Transactions Indiana State Medical Society for 1859.)

[The Chairman of the Committee on Medical Education not being present, the undersigned, who has made reports from this standing committee at each of the last two annual meetings of the Society, and was therefore surprised to find himself on it again, being, indeed, the only member of the Committee now present, would beg leave to offer the following prefatory statement, viz: In view of the action of the Society, in 1858, on the report then made on this subject, the undersigned doubted the propriety of submitting any report at this meeting. He therefore communicated with another member of the Committee, Dr. Fry, and he with Dr. Newland, also a member of the Committee. Dr. Fry urged the submission of the same report made last year, and laid on the table. He says: "I regard the above suggestions [viz, 'legislative action, a longer course of study in the medical schools, and efforts on the part of physicians to enlighten the community,' made to him by Dr. Newland] as very important. The preliminary education, the habit of study, mental application, reflection, are all important. So long as every broken-down mechanic, merchant, farmer, and the illiterate, uneducated, can enter the profession through our medical schools, by the expenditure of a few hundred dollars, we may not hope to succeed in our efforts at elevating our standard of qualifications. Our medical schools, looking only to pecuniary considerations, have become the nurseries of quackery. I know that many able men are educated in them, but by far the greater number are wholly unfit to practice the profession. If we can get our Society to take the proper stand, we may soon hope to induce some one of the schools to modify their system of instruction, and make it what it should be, and what the interests of humanity demand. I concur with you most fully in every sentiment and letter of the report. I maintain its correctness, I maintain its feasibility, I maintain the necessity of its passage, and the adoption of its principles by every medical school in the Union. The interests of the profession—the interests of suffering humanity—demand it; and the schools cannot refuse without a violation of right and duty. No school of medicine has a right to place upon an equal footing before the world, a ripe scholar, whose mind is well disciplined and stored with the richest gems of learning, and a dunce, who has dreamed away his life and wasted his energies and substance in riotous living. And yet not a year passes that this is not done by every school in the Union. They grant diplomas alike to the qualified and the ignorant, and say to the world, "These men are equal; they stand upon the same platform." This is all wrong—it is unjust; and I cannot think of it without a burning sense of indignation, *that so much effort is needed to effect reform.* But let us suffer and be strong. Every blow struck clears away some rubbish—every ray of

light emitted illumines the surrounding darkness. A brighter day may yet dawn upon us."

Nine days ago the Chairman of the Committee wrote to the undersigned as follows, viz: "From the action of the Society last year, it seems to me worse than folly to get up any report; and I thought of simply offering a short preamble and resolutions—the first declaring it unnecessary for practitioners of medicine to be educated, the second erasing the Committee on Medical Education from the list of standing committees." He made the motion yesterday, which was adopted, making this report the special order for this hour, with a view to the examination last night of this report now to be offered, but left the city just before night, sending the undersigned a verbal message that he might not return. Under these embarrassing circumstances, the undersigned submitted to the consideration of some half dozen zealous members of this Society the report made last year, and this—which he now begs leave to offer under their advisement, with a single additional remark, viz—He has no desire, no aim, save to *find the truth*, and tenaciously adhere to what he believes is truth, careless whether, in so doing, he stands with the many or the few.]

One of the most distinguished characteristics of the last half century, whether the domains of science, art, or letters, be regarded, is PROGRESS. To such extent is this true, that *the adept*, in almost any department, of fifty years ago, would be but *a tyro* now. We rejoice in this fact, and think we see yet wider fields for the future display of this grand characteristic of the age, especially in Physiological, Pathological, and Therapeutic science and art; and most particularly so in the department of Medical Education, embracing both preliminary and professional instruction and training. The last only concerns us now.

Although much has been written and spoken on this subject in the medical journals of the country, and in the various organizations of professional men, from the American Medical Association, organized in 1847, through the various grades of medical societies to the humblest of them, it must be admitted that little or no actual progress has been made in raising the standard of qualifications amongst medical men. Indeed, we are not sure by any means, that while the standard reached by many members of the profession of the present day is certainly much higher than was attainable fifty years ago, nevertheless, the standard *required to be reached*, before admission to the profession, is not really *lower* now than it was then. Inquire of the aged members of the profession, and they will inform you that twenty, thirty, or forty years ago, although the means and facilities for acquiring a knowledge of the profession, as well as its known truths, were much more meagre and contracted than now, yet still, a higher standard of preliminary education then prevailed amongst medical students, and more time and labor were devoted to the greatly narrower professional field, as compared with the present.

Thus we see, that while the field of professional study has been greatly extended, and the facilities for its cultivation increased, *less time and labor* are now spent in reaching a so-called *respectable* position in the profession. For it is notorious, that every year students who are rejected from physicians' offices (and the number of such might be, and, we believe, *ought to* be greatly increased,) as unfit, by reason of inferior mental endowments or the absence of preliminary education and mental training, to aspire to a place in the profession, are placed upon an equal footing with the most thoroughly trained and educated men, the brightest ornaments of the profession, by our medical schools from one end of the land to the other, almost, if not entirely, without exception. This fact is *indisputable*, and we think can be traced to the following three producing causes, viz: 1st. To

the private examination for, and conferring of degrees on their own pupils, by professional teachers, whose pecuniary income is proportioned to the number of pupils and of graduates. In this way, one of the mightiest impelling forces in human nature—the love of money—is made to operate to the reduction instead of the elevation of the standard of both preliminary and professional education. And although we can, with glowing pride, point to examples, here and there, of individuals who are able to rise above all mercenary considerations, we are forced to acknowledge that this is an impossiblefeat with the mass of mankind.

2d. The fast spirit of the age, which impels candidates for all professions, and, indeed, all employments requiring skilled labor—mental or physical—to rush into them with undue preparation, at the earliest possible period, so that it will not insure immediate defeat and disgrace—a catastrophe less likely to befall the novice in our profession than in any other, for the simple reason, that if he will only go where his antecedents are unknown, the public cannot for some time, if ever, distinguish between the merest tyro and the well qualified physician; and

3d. The ignorance of the public as to the requisites of the true physician; their general skepticism of the science and the art of medicine; and numerous cases of *apparent* success in persons of their acquaintance, who have devoted but very little time or study to the profession.

Under these circumstances, the student (*in nomine solo*), driven from the physician's or private teacher's office, for want of essential requisites, goes at once to one of our medical schools—and it matters not a great deal to which of them, for though there *is* a difference, it is very much *less* than many suppose—and, *by paying* for two courses of lectures and the graduation fee, although he may not actually hear a dozen of either course of lectures, he may, in eight months time in some schools, sixteen months in the most fastidious of them, obtain a diploma certifying his full qualification to practice every department of the profession. Or, if unwilling to pay for two courses of lectures, he may go to some strange place, at once dub himself "Doctor," and, if possessed of a certain tact, will in many communities obtain a standing equal to that of any worthy member of the profession. Or, failing in that, may, after four years *pretended* practice, obtain a diploma by paying for a single course of lectures, return, and *claim* an equal standing with any.

These facts render not simply preposterous, but absolutely ridiculous, the effort almost constantly put forth by some professors in our medical schools, and their agents, to make the possession of a diploma the test of respectability in the profession, as was attempted at the recent meeting of the American Medical Association.

Let the medical schools cease to award their diplomas to men utterly unworthy of them—many of them in fact, unfit to *commence* the study of the profession—and they *may* slightly enhance the value of their parchments. But a vast deal more than that must be done by them, before they can with any sort of propriety assume *to themselves all* knowledge of the wants of the profession relating to medical education, and authority to dictate the system of tuition to be humbly accepted by the profession. The day for this supercilious arrogance is rapidly passing away. There is too much of independent investigation of the subject now going on in the profession for the old regime to continue much longer. Not only individuals, but many influential journals—not under the control of medical schools—and even some that are—have within the last two years spoken out in terms of dissatisfaction with the existing status of medical education, not to be misunderstood nor disregarded. Nay more, although, by no means agreed as to the details of a suitable, desirable, and attainable system of instruction, they

are, nevertheless, on the track of some of those great principles essentially necessary to a *rational* system. As an example, now about to be attempted, practically, we may mention the Medical Department of Lind University, at Chicago, Illinois, where students are classified and taught accordingly—the terms lengthened—the number of daily lectures diminished—examinations more thorough—and the four years of real or sham practice in lieu of the first course of lectures abolished—and we are encouraged by the signs of the times to believe that patience, perseverance, and enlarged liberality as to minor differences only, are necessary to ensure early success in the attainment of far more and greater good, than until very recently the most ardent dared hope for.

The prominent outlines of a rational system of medical education, in the judgment of your committee, were presented clearly and forcibly in the Report on this subject in 1857, and published in the transactions of that year. Your committee adopt that report, and now present it to the Society for adoption or rejection—as it has never acted upon it—the Report having been referred to the Committee on Publication by the Society before, and in anticipation of its reception. Your committee also adopt the general principles of the Report on Legislation, also presented in 1857, and referred to the Committee on Publication without having been read, and not published.

These Reports regard the following as serious evils in our current system of medical education, to be remedied by the use of every means at our disposal, viz.: the admission to pupilage of many who are deficient in natural endowments, or preliminary education, or mental training; the merely nominal character of office instruction generally prevalent; the extreme shortness of the terms of instruction in our medical schools; the great number of lectures daily, and the meagreness of the examinations thereon in the absence of anything like recitations; the want of division of students into classes of corresponding grades, and a progressive course of study from foundation or elementary principles, to the higher departments of practical application; secret examination of candidates for the degree, and undue prominence of the almighty dollar; and they consider as amongst the efficient means for the removal of these evils, frequent discussions of the subject both in and out of the profession, in the spirit of earnest searchers after the right; mutual individual and associated encouragement to reject unworthy candidates for pupilage; and repeated and persistent rational efforts to secure legislation, providing first, for a competent and impartial Board of Examiners, not less than seven in number, to be chosen by this Society, who shall meet at the capital once or twice annually, for the public oral examination of all future candidates for the practice of Medicine, Surgery, and the Apothecary's Art, and issue certificates to those found qualified; prohibiting all others thereafter from entering upon the practice under suitable penalties. Second—legalizing dissections. And third—requiring the venders of patent and other medicinal compounds, to place on every package or parcel sold, the names and proportions of each and every ingredient, in plain English.

And your committee ask the Society to take up and consider fully the subject matter of these Reports, and take definite action thereon. If the principles they inculcate are correct, let the Society adopt them and stand out boldly before the profession and the world, as earnest and sincere advocates of progress in raising higher the standard of Medical Education, and placing it upon a rational basis. If they are not correct, amend or reject, and put forth such distinct utterances on this vitally important subject as will enable all who desire it, to understand the exact position occupied by the Indiana State Medical Society.

Your committee believe that the most important conflict ever waged on the arena of our profession—considering either the number or character of the combatants, or the important interests at stake, is begun. The parties are, the medical schools and their worshippers on the one hand—the great body of the intelligent and earnest portion of the profession, and a considerable portion of the public on the other. They are already marshaling their hosts, with eyes steadily fixed on the alternative issues of LIFE and EXTERMINATION—and the struggle can never end until one of the parties achieves a complete victory. Although the schools have important advantages in the prestige of their authority and *assumed* conservatism—the superior discipline and compactness of their forces—and the material resources at their command, your committee believe that no prophetic ken is necessary to decide that the other party, battling for the good of the whole profession, and of the human race, will eventually wear the conqueror's crown. The struggle *may be* long, and loud, but recent events encourage to renewed hope that a *speedy* issue may be attained. Already have the predictions, and apprehensions, and the dimly shadowed hope, expressed in the closing paragraph of the Report of 1857, on page 52 of transactions, been realized :

"The old system, irrational as it evidently is, will struggle hard for life. Many who live by the craft, will cry out as of old, under similar impulses, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.' And we may find some who ought to be earnest co-adjutors, wholly indifferent, if not actual opposers. But our noble profession—noble in its nature, its origin, and its aims—degraded only by the unworthiness of its professed representatives—and poor, bleeding, suffering humanity, call in trumpet tones and agonizing wails upon us to go forward in the spirit of the 'Great Physician,' to the accomplishment of the glorious and beneficent work before us."

That all this has been already realized, your committee need not say to any who attended the last annual meeting of this Society—or the recent meetings of the convention of delegates from Medical Schools—and of the American Medical Association in a neighboring city, for settlement of this vexed question.

None of the schools having large classes, sent delegates to the convention—and their friends vauntingly said : "WE are doing well enough—WE desire no change—OUR HALLS ARE FULL"—and some of the delegates, with the supercilious air of men dressed in a little brief authority, real or imaginary, intimated to the profession at large, that it is none of their business to be meddling with medical education—that they, the learned professors, know better than any and all others, the wants of the profession, and would undertake to arrange the whole matter properly—that all that the practitioners have to do, is, to be very careful in the selection of their pupils, and very diligent in their instruction—it being impossible for them, the aforesaid learned professors, to make bricks without straw—in plain English, if none but sensible students, with good preliminary education and elementary professional training, *offer to pay them* for their tickets and diplomas, they will cease to issue their sheep-skins to Jackasses—but, as it is, they can't help themselves, for, they must take such as they can get—and it is of vastly more consequence to them to have their pockets filled with gold, than that the profession and humanity should be saved from the curse of having uneducated ninnies for physicians and surgeons. Some even went so far as to demand the virtual expulsion from the American Medical Association of some of its worthiest members, unless they will condescend *to pay* some of these profeseors—their inferiors in every element of professional character—some hundred and fifty dollars, more or less, for a bit of parchment not worth intrinsically a dime: for, the evidence is conclusive,

that all our medical schools issue, every year, diplomas to utterly unworthy applicants.

Your committee would urge the Society to decide promptly with which of the parties in this great conflict it will identify itself in feeling and action. Whether, following the voice at once of Divinity and humanity, crying, "Let us go on unto perfection," it will manfully join the hosts advocating reform and progress—and with them march through toil, and patient waiting and suffering to the conquest of ignorance, empiricism, and grasping avarice, which have so long by their combined influences kept the profession in the dust—and raise it to that elevated position it ought to occupy towards the human race—or, hearkening to the timid cry, "A lion! a lion is in the way! these views are all right in the abstract—these ends very desirable—but they are just twenty-five or fifty years in advance of the age, and impossible of attainment now!" sit down and do nothing to elevate the standard of qualification for entrance into the profession—or, more likely still, join the enemies of all progress in their hue and cry against innovation.

In conclusion, your committee would recommend the adoption of the following resolutions, viz:

Resolved, That concurring in the general principles of the foregoing report, and for the purpose of developing and diffusing a correct public sentiment both in and out of the profession in reference thereto—and for the further purpose of securing concert and harmony of action in some definite proposal to the next Legislature for its official action in behalf of the public good, this Society will hold an extra meeting in this city one day before the next annual meeting, for further discussion of the subjects embraced therein.

2. That local Medical Societies throughout the State, and all members of this Society, be urged to agitate the subject in their respective localities.

3. That a Committee of Arrangements and Correspondence be appointed to make all needful preparations for the proposed extra meeting.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

CHARLES FISHBACK,
On behalf of the Committee.

May 18, 1859.

The author, as Chairman of the Committee on Medical Education, Indiana State Medical Society, will be pleased to receive communications from any who feel disposed to make them, on this subject, whether according with his views or not. He will feel under special obligations to officers or members of Societies represented in the American Medical Association, for lists of their Delegates to the next meeting of the Association. Address Charles Fishback, Shelbyville, Ind.

The Standing Committee on Medical Education, of the American Medical Association, consists of D. M. Reese, New York City, Chairman; W. K. Bowling, Nashville, Tennessee; Charles Fishback, Shelbyville, Indiana; John Bell, Philadelphia; and Zina Pitcher, Detroit, Michigan. Dr. Reese invites communications on the subject until February, 1860.

